

First Recorded Sighting of the Major Mitchell Cockatoo in the Metropolitan Area.—On July 7, 1969 a pair of Major Mitchell Cockatoos (*Cacatua leadbeateri*) were sighted in the vicinity of the Guildford Grammar Preparatory School. It was assumed at the time that they were cage escapees. However their subsequent behaviour suggested they were wild birds.

For several days the cockatoos were seen at various localities around the school and river. On July 12 their behaviour changed and they began investigating tree holes in the large river gums (*Eucalyptus rudis*) below the school. Eventually a hole was selected about 40ft. from the ground; this, incidentally, resulted in a "take-over" from a pair of Twentyeight Parrots. From the amount of fresh chips and frass discarded on the ground below the hole the birds must have considerably enlarged the original cavity.

Up to August 21 (when I left for Denmark during the school holidays) one of the birds remained in the nesting hole for most of the day while the other, the male, remained outside perched on a convenient branch. The indications were that incubation was in progress. Unfortunately when I returned I found the birds had deserted. I suspect that they had been disturbed by small boys during the holidays. Members of the Preparatory School staff in residence saw two birds flying over the playing fields on September 8, which apparently was the last sighting of the species.

The fact that Major Mitchells have been sighted, and were evidently attempting to nest, in the Perth metropolitan area, is of great interest in view of the remarks by Serventy and Whittell (*Birds of Western Australia*, 4th. edn., 1967, p. 61) of the extension of range of many dry country species into the South-West corner. These authors give the south-western boundary of the normal distribution of the Major Mitchell as a line passing from about Jurien Bay, through Toodyay to Esperance.

Credit for the first sighting at Guildford must go to Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Hamersley who drew my attention to the cockatoos.

—PETER McMILLAN, Guildford Grammar School, Guildford.

A Record of an Invertebrate Preying on a Vertebrate.—Whilst I was engaged on a preliminary survey of the Lake Barker Flora and Fauna Reserve (24049) I camped near the abandoned Banker Mine, approximately 10 miles SSE of Marvel Loch. At 2120 hrs. on 8 January, 1970 I heard a rustle in some leaf and bark litter of Gimlet (*Eucalyptus salubris*) lying on the sandy soil. Investigation showed that a Tiger Centipede (*Scolopendra morsitans*) had grasped a Gecko (*Oedura reticulata*) and the two were threshing about in the leaves. The centipede had the gecko in its jaws and its body lay along the top of the lizard body, embracing it with its numerous legs.

During the flurry the gecko's tail broke off and threshed violently. The centipede transferred its attention to the tail, rolling itself into a complete ball around the violently twitching object. The gecko moved away and I collected it, as well as the rolled-up centipede, keeping each specimen in a separate container. In the morning the centipede was found to have entirely consumed the tail and the gecko appeared to be unharmed, though minus a tail. The centipede was juvenile, 840 mm. in length, while the gecko measured 780 mm. in body length, the tail being an additional 220 mm. The gecko and centipede were identified, respectively, by Dr. G. M. Storr and Mr. L. E. Koeh, of the W.A. Museum, in which institution the specimens have been deposited.

The incident demonstrates how the easily-shed tail of geckoes is of biological utility in facilitating escape from a predator.

Records of invertebrate predation on vertebrates are rare and usually refer to spiders (McKeown, *Australian Spiders*, 1952; Butler and B. Y. Main, *W. Aust. Nat.*, 7, 1959 : 52). Shugg (*W. Aust. Nat.*, 8, 1961 : 52) gives an account of a centipede attacking and devouring a mouse.

W. H. BUTLER, North Perth.